DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 155 SP 007 880

AUTHOR Dixon, Billy G.; Seiferth, Berniece
TITLE The Changing Role of the University Supervisor of Student Teachers.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *College Supervisors; *Cooperating Teachers; Methods Courses; Practicum Supervision; *Student Teaching; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

With decreasing enrollments in student teaching programs and the increasing need for more responsive education, it has become imperative that the choosing of cooperating teachers be more selective and that all concerned--university supervisors of student teachers, cooperating teachers, teachers of methods classes in the college of education, and even the subject matter professors--begin to work closely together to strengthen the experience of student teaching. Since the university supervisor spends a relatively short time in observing the student teacher in action compared to the time spent by the cooperating teacher, it seems obligatory that the cooperating teacher be trained to make a more constructive contribution on a day-to-day basis. It appears entirely feasible that at the beginning of each quarter, all of the cooperating teachers in a certain area of concentration could come together for a meeting. At such a meeting, the methods teacher could explain the methods he is teaching and clarify any questions about them. The university supervisors likewise could contribute their expectations of the student teachers. Later, the university supervisor could meet with the cooperating teacher and student teacher to plan specialized teaching procedures, taking into account the individual student teaching situation. Techniques of counseling could be discussed at this initial meeting also. In this way, the student teacher would receive closer supervision during his teaching experience. (Author/DDO)

ED 090155

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The Changing Role of the University Supervisor of Student Teachers

Billy G. Dixon, Chairman
Department of Professional
Education Experiences
Southern Illinois University

Berniece Seiferth
Department of Professional
Education Experiences
Southern Illinois University

SP 007 886

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

In many universities, the deans of colleges of education are either taking the initiative, although in some cases reluctantly, to limit enrollment of students in teacher education programs, or this is being forced upon them by higher boards of education. Many of our present day college professors as well as students are taking a hard look at the educational preparation for teaching. More often than not, it is apparent that a number of teacher education programs do not prepare teachers adequately for coping with the current students whom they will be teaching. This is especially true of those teachers who will be assigned to ghetto areas. Many of them are finding their college preparation is lacking in training them for a situation which they themselves may never have experienced as elementary or secondary pupils.

Scores of others are going out to teach exactly as they were taught in high school. Unfortunately, in many of their college classes the same overworked methods of lecture and question and answer over a daily assignment of a given number of pages in a textbook are the most frequently used teaching procedures. It is this vicious circle that needs to be broken as quickly as possible in the training of prospective teachers.

A number of professors of education classes and supervisors of student teachers share the concern that we must train students to meet the changing needs of the '70's. Some criticism is being voiced by administrators and school boards about having student teachers in their school systems. They feel that a teacher is drawing full salary but that a Student Teacher or series of student teachers is performing all the work to the detriment of learning achievement of the pupils within the schoolroom. We would have to admit that much of this criticism is valid, but where it is, a student teaching experience is taking place that is not ideal nor even one for which departments of student teaching are striving.

Therefore, it is becoming more and more imperative that students spend the time allotted for the all important experience of student teaching with public school teachers who are best equipped to give them the aid and direction they need in learning to cope with teaching. This means that the cooperating teachers in the public schools need to be people who are flexible in utilizing different methods, who do not hold rigid attitudes, who are willing to stay in classrooms and participate more in a team-teaching venture. It also means that there is no longer a place for cooperating teachers who hand a roomful of students over to a Student Teacher the first week of his presence, proceed to the teachers' lounge and feel that they have done their duty by letting the student teacher "have at it."

Rather, we need experienced classroom teachers who have had a degree of success in working with students, who have used innovative ideas and methods of presentation of material, and who have continued to learn and participate through in-service training to keep abreast of current literature and procedures in their field of specialization. These classroom teachers also need to be people who are enthusiastic and able to work with student teachers in an atmosphere of shared tasks and responsibilities which ultimately will work to the advantage of all concerned -- the classroom pupils, the neophyte teacher, and the Cooperating Teacher.

In recent years, with burgeoning enrollments in colleges of education, some student teaching departments at times were compelled to select some cooperating teachers who fell far short of being the best supervisors of student teachers. These were not good teaching models themselves, and they often failed to give worthwhile constructive criticism to the student teachers. Those cooperating teachers did not feel comfortable about allowing different teaching methods to be used, and many even spent a large percent of time out of the classroom. Consequently, everyone suffered. When it came time to evaluate the Student Teacher, the natural inclination was to give a grade of A, either because the Cooperating Teacher felt obligated because he knew the Student Teacher had carried his load for a quarter, or because he honestly didn't know how the student had done, having spent so little time in the classroom observing him teach.

One of the most common complaints of a student teacher is that so little help is received from the Cooperating Teacher -- no comments, pro or con. He just teaches, on a trial and error basis, and hopes that no news is good news and that eventually he will receive an A for effort.

With decreasing enrollments in our student teaching programs, it becomes imperative that we become more selective in choosing cooperating teachers, and that all concerned, the univerisity supervisors of student teachers, teachers of methods classes in the college of education, and even the subject matter professors begin to work closely together to strengthen the experience of student teaching.

Since the University Supervisor spends a relatively short time in observing the Student Teacher in action compared to the time spent by the Cooperating Teacher, it seems obligatory that the Cooperating Teacher be trained to make a more constructive contribution on a day-to-day basis. However, in order to do this, it will be necessary that the methods teachers also be brought directly into the planning of the student teaching experience. Together with the University Supervisor and the Cooperating Teacher, he should help plan activities in which the Student Teacher will participate.

Thus, the Cooperating Teacher would understand what the student teacher is to do, could supervise this program daily, and when the University Supervisor visits, could discuss progress of the student more effectively. The Cooperating

Teacher would feel more comfortable about the whole experience because of his previous involvement and input on an equal basis with the University Supervisor and the methods professor. He would know what was realistic for accomplishment in his own school situation. The University Supervisor would feel more confident since he would know that the Student Teacher was engaged in various activities during his absence and not just putting on a contrived lesson for his visit. And the methods teacher would profit, knowing that what he is teaching is being put into practice. This is not to say that "methods" courses are free of criticism. All too often these are taught by professors who have either not been in a public school classroom recently to understand the changes that have occurred there or who have come to their duties with little, if any, public school teaching background. In this manner, their courses often contain ideas and procedures that just will not fit the "real world". However, with this cooperative planning, the methods classes might become much more realistic.

It appears entirely feasible that at the beginning of each quarter, all of the cooperating teachers of a certain area of concentration, such as social studies, could come together for a meeting. Similar meetings would be held for each of the areas of concentration. At such a time, the methods teacher would explain the methods he is teaching and clarify any questions about them. The university

supervisors likewise would contribute their ideas of expectations from the student teachers. If the subject matter professor could be induced to attend, he could add one more dimension to the conference.

Later, the University Supervisor and individual Cooperating Teacher, together with the Student Teacher, could meet to plan specialized teaching procedures, taking into consideration the limitations of materials available, the type school system involved, the abilities of the student teacher to handle certain techniques, the subject matter to be covered that particular quarter, availability of field trips, etc. Techniques of counseling could be discussed at this initial meeting also.

Consequently, the Cooperating Teacher and Student Teacher could enter into a team teaching relationship, in a manner of speaking. Both would feel confident working together, since they would be aware of goals which they had set in a cooperative relationship. They also would know how they hoped to accomplish their aims. In such a classroom, there would be two people sharing the responsibility instead of one. In addition, the Cooperating Teacher would not on occasion feel like excess baggage but would continue to have an instructional role along with the Student Teacher. They both could be working with small groups within the classroom, or one might be working with a group in the library, or there might be a sharing of presentation of

materials to the entire class. The important concept is that each would be involved in planning and executing all plans. And there would be continuous and effective evaluation plus an elimination of much of the hit and miss teaching that some student teachers are now doing.

At the time the University Supervisor made his regular visits, effective communication with the Cooperating Teacher on the progress of the student in his total program would be forthcoming. Since many supervisors are limited by class load to one visit every two weeks, much valuable time and comments are lost presently to the Student Teacher unless the Cooperating Teacher is conferring with him daily. Under the shared plan, the Cooperating Teacher would know what the student should be doing, and progress reports could be made to the University Supervisor over all that had been done since the last visit. The University Supervisor actually would be more informed of the student's experiences than under the present system.

Such a design does not make the work of the University Supervisor any easier, but is simply a change in direction. Effort has always been made to select the very best qualified Cooperating Teachers to work with student teachers. However, the pressure of numbers has at times dictated that we involve some cooperating teachers whose motivation for involvement might have been something other that a strong desire to assist in the development of a potential member

of the profession. In many instances, the best the University Supervisor can do in such a situation is to smooth "troubled waters" if problems arise, advise the students not to rock the boat, or provide in some instances whatever direction the Student Teacher might need. In other words, a poor type of instruction is being perpetuated at best. This sometimes forces the University Supervisor into the role of attempting to salvage a favorable evaluation for a Student Teacher for an experience that is worth very little.

Consequently, it seems important now that more cooperative planning prior to student teaching be done by the cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and professors of methods classes. This will insure that every day of the student teaching experience will be meaningful and filled with satisfaction. It also will result in happier administrators, student teachers, and classroom pupils.